

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

historic John Ross Home, "Old Matt's Cabin"

and/or common "Old Matt's Cabin"

2. Location

street & number Missouri Highway 76

not for publication

city, town Branson

☒ vicinity of

congressional district 7

state Missouri

code 29

county Taney

code 213

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name The Shepherd of the Hills Historical Society, Inc.

street & number Missouri Highway 76 (mailing address Route 1, Box 10)

city, town Branson

☒ vicinity of

state Missouri

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds

street & number Taney County Courthouse

city, town Forsyth

state Missouri

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title 1. Missouri: A Guide to the
"Show-Me" State (WPA Project)has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1941

☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Published: New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, Inc.

city, town

state

7. Description

Condition

☒ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved

date September 1, 1954

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Ross house was built in increments beginning as a single cell log structure and culminating as a cottage with a main room (parlor), bedroom, kitchen, screen porch, and front porch. This building sequence began with the construction of the log cell in the mid-1880s or, more likely, the mid-1890s. It was substantially ended by the time John Ross sold the property in December of 1910.¹

An examination of the structure and a number of old photographs yields a fairly clear construction sequence. The log cell with a loft, and possible leanto kitchen were constructed first.² The kitchen, if it existed, was torn away to make way for later additions, and nothing of it remains. Most of the west log wall was removed, and the frame bedroom and kitchen were added. The kitchen formed an L on the northwest corner. The kitchen and bedroom appear to have been first sheathed in vertical board and batten, but then the battens were removed and replaced with horizontal siding.

The earliest photo available shows the building with the addition already covered with horizontal siding (see exhibit). In this photo, the roof is an extension of the original cell roof, forming a hip over the west end of the building. There is a door but no window in the east log side with the east gable end. The next old photo exhibit shows that a ridge dormer was added over the roof of the addition, and a window was cut into the east gable. Since this window was offset, it is clear that a fireplace was planned for the center of the east wall. Piles of stone seen in the photograph may indicate this coming work.

Other old photos, even those taken when the place was still a functioning farmstead, show the house in essentially its present form with the fieldstone fireplace and chimney in the center of the east end flanked by windows; fieldstone piers under the porch posts and fieldstone steps; and finally a screen porch in the northeast corner.³

It's not completely clear whether the log structure was built in the mid-1880s or 1890s. The first date found in government documents is a homestead date recorded in the Springfield land office for the parcel by John Ross on October 10, 1902.⁴ The abstract itself gives a patent date of October 1, 1903 and a filing date of May 12, 1904. An account written by the son of a prominent local resident says John Ross came to the area in late 1895 to select his cabin site and stake out his 160 acre homestead.⁵ This account describes his return eight months later with his family when he required the help of Levi Morril (the writer's father) and Truman Powell to find where his stakes were driven. Thus the cabin would may have been finished in 1896.⁶ Such a date would correspond with the five-year occupation of the homestead before the granting of the patent. Other accounts indicate that Ross homesteaded after having to sell a farm in the Springfield area when he was unable to meet the mortgage at a time of national panic.⁷ The panic was part of a depression and began in the first year of Cleveland's second term, 1893, therefore Ross would have had to sell about 1894 or 1895.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1895(?) - 1909 Builder/Architect John and Charles Ross

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The John Ross house, now commonly known as "Old Matt's Cabin," has historic significance for three reasons. First, it is a somewhat atypical example of a substantial, additive log-and-frame home built during the last years of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth century. Second, it is associated with a major popular writer, Harold Bell Wright, who visited there often. The house was the home of three people who served as models for characters in Wright's most popular novel, The Shepherd of the Hills. The characters were "Old Matt," "Aunt Mollie," and "Young Matt," and the book became one of the most popular works of fiction in the first half of this century. Third, because of its association with The Shepherd of the Hills, the house became a place to visit in the early days of Ozark automobile tourism. It must be closely associated with the development of tourism--the major industry in the area. Today the house is open to the public and remains one of the major attractions in the state of Missouri.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Attached

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Garber

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

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4	7	2	4	4	5
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification A part of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 27, Township 23 N, Range 22 W, described as follows: Beginning on the north right of way line of Missouri Highway 76 at a point in a parallel line from the east wall of Old Matt's Cabin; thence easterly along said right of way line a distance of 150 feet; thence north a

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state Missouri code county Taney code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. David M. Quick, Historian of Art & Architecture, SMSU

organization The Shepherd of the Hills Historical Society, Inc. date October, 1982

street & number Rt., 1, Box 770 telephone 417-334-4191

city or town Branson state Missouri

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☒ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

[Signature]

6/6/83

Director, Department of Natural Resources and

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The people giving tours at the farm normally suggest that the Rosses were on the land in the 1880s or by 1890.⁸ This is also conceivable because people in the area often settled for some time before filing on the land or before completing the homestead process. There is some evidence which tends to support the earlier datings. The finding of the date of 1889 on newspaper covering a wall in the log section of the house under some fiberboard has been reported.⁹ (People covered the walls with newspapers to keep out drafts.) The floor and roof framing in the log cell are nailed with square cut nails. The approximate date for the transition from square cut to wire nails is normally accepted to be about 1890.

The original log cell is quite large with the interior dimensions of 19' 6" x 14' 11". The cabin is unusually square--the diagonal being nearly equal. The joints are half-dovetail, and the logs are hand-hewn on the vertical surfaces to about an 8" thickness. The walls are chinked with pieces of wood on diagonals. Most of the daubing is cement, but there are traces of what appears to be lime mortar in areas where the more recent cement daubing has broken out. All these details are common regional practice; however, in other respects the construction of the log cell is quite atypical.¹⁰

The log sills rest upon continuous fieldstone footings instead of the more common stone corners. These footings are to be seen in all photographs. The north and south sill are large timbers hewn on all four sides. The first logs on the east and west are half-notched into the sills leaving a larger than normal gap above the sills to allow for rough-sawn floor joists instead of the puncheons normally used in log structures. Sections of small logs are used as blocking between the joists. The joists are nailed with square cut nails.

Above the final wall logs or plate, the ceiling and roof are again framed in an atypical manner. In the typical log house the ceiling joists are dovetailed into a log somewhat below the plate to allow greater headroom in the loft and stabilize joints. If sawn lumber was used, the joist ends were notched into a lower log or attached to a nailing strip. In this house the 6" ceiling joists which carry the loft floor rest upon the plate logs and are on 16" centers. Normally in a log building, the rafters fit into notches in the plates. In this structure, the rafters are notched for the plate and extend slightly beyond, where they are covered to form a boxed cornice. The rafters are on 24" centers, and rafters and ceiling joists are attached with square cut nails.

The departures from common log construction methods in floor and roof areas would not be atypical for a frame building. This suggests that the original cell was built by a skilled carpenter and a sawmill was convenient because all the lumber, other than the logs, was sawn but not planed. John Ross had worked in Springfield, Missouri, as a carpenter.¹¹

Some accounts assert that Ross chose the site he did because he conceived of putting a sawmill in Mutton Hollow to the south of the homestead. However, one account

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states that the mill was already in the hollow operated by William Powell, and John Ross and his son were later proprietors.¹² The presence of a good deal of sawn lumber in the earliest part of the construction of the house suggests this last account might be true.

The floor of sawn boards has one interesting feature. The floorboards are laid with their edges over very thin narrow strips, making the floor tight with a single layer of boards. The ceiling joists are exposed so that the plank loft floor forms the ceiling which is 97" above the floor.

The north and south doors of the log cell are factory productions, each with a large single light--no doubt replacing earlier doors. The other major features of the log segment of the house are the result of modifications which will be mentioned in sequence.

Sometime, most likely shortly after the turn of the century, a frame addition was made to the west end of the log cell. This addition included what is now a bedroom and a kitchen. The kitchen projects to the northwest to form an L. In order to accommodate this addition, the west log wall was sawn out leaving only the ends of the logs in the joints. The addition also rests on continuous stone footings broken along the south side for a cellar entrance. The addition is sided with narrow double beveled siding. What appears as two siding strips is really one board. The roof ridge of the log cell was extended part way over the addition and then hipped to cover the remainder of the addition. The roof over the kitchen is also hipped.

Vertical oak boards are visible under the siding on the addition so it is likely that the addition first had board and batten siding. According to local testimony, the addition was built in anticipation of Harold Bell Wright's 1904 visit, and Ross mortgaged the place for \$300 to build the addition to move his mill from Mutton Hollow to Roark Creek, converting it from water to steam power.¹³ The abstract does indeed show a \$300 mortgage, but it is dated 1907 not 1904.¹⁴ Since Wright's last stay at the Ross homestead was after 1907, and milling his own lumber would have cost Ross little money, it may be that the \$300 mortgage was to alter and move the mill and reside the addition with beveled siding which Ross could not have milled himself. Most of the other lumber in the addition is rough sawn except for window and door frames.

The floor joists for the addition are 2 x 6's, and each is supported by a post in the center. The windows in the addition are double hung two-over-two, and the doors are hand made plank ones with rim locks--those to the outside have single lights. The bedroom and kitchen walls have a fiberboard covering apparently over boards. The bedroom ceiling has a fiber ceiling attached to boards under the joists, while the kitchen is open to the rafters. The wall between the bedroom and kitchen has an offset to accommodate a brick stove flue and a cupboard. There is an open recess under the cupboard. The roofs of the entire structure are covered with fairly new shakes which replaced the originals.

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Since the west log wall of the original cell was removed, the stair in the northwest corner of the log cell was probably constructed at the time of the addition.

After the addition of the bedroom and kitchen, a ridge dormer was added over the western hip of the roof, and the east gable end was cut for one offset casement window to provide cross-ventilation in the loft. There is wall boarding in the loft which may also be from this time, but it has since been covered with fiberboard.

A rough fieldstone fireplace with a central chimney was added to the center of the east log wall in a place once occupied by a door. The door can be seen in an early photo. Some of the door frame still remains above the fireplace. The fireplace opening is arched 32½" high, 50" wide and 24" deep. The fireplace is flanked by high horizontal eight-light casement windows which do not appear in photos taken prior to the addition of the fireplace.

The porch which extends along the entire south log wall was given three stone pillars probably about the time the fireplace was built because the pillars do not appear in pre-fireplace photos. A frame, bevel-sided, leanto, dirt-floored screen porch was added to the northeast corner of the home and also appears only in the photos with the fireplace. The northern eave of this porch is very low allowing for what is now a 64" door height on its north wall.

Ross probably sold the farm in 1910 after all this work was completed. The next owner eventually used the building for storage, and photos taken during the period of his ownership show all the work completed. Since the time of Ross's ownership, a good deal of restoration and maintenance has been done, but there has only been minor alteration to the basic structures. The screen porch has been given a concrete floor, and concrete steps now replace earlier fieldstone steps as a safety measure. The roof shakes have been replaced, and so has the siding of the north wall of the screen porch.

Along the west wall of the house is a low wooden porch with no rail or roof and also a cistern with a large 9' 6" x 9' x 3" concrete cover. Just at the northwest corner of the cistern is a small (8' 2" x 6' 6") vertically boarded, frameless shed with metal battens. In the area, this sort of structure is usually referred to as a smokehouse, but is more apt to have been used as a summer kitchen. It is in poor condition and is probably the most recent structure in the complex.

About 18 yards west of the house is a two-bay structure in poor condition which is referred to as a wagon shed and was probably used as such. This shed has a gabled roof created by two shed roofs joined at the ridge over a center wall. This shed does not appear in early photos of the house although there is a different structure in its approximate location.

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About 53 yards east of the house is a barn which may date from the time of the first house construction. It is of a common timber frame type with mortise and tenon joints. The posts are set in the ground rather than on footings and a sill. The vertical siding is original. Metal battens are again used. The barn has been restored, although the upper frame is original. Half a loft remains, but the whole plan may have been covered with a loft. The barn measures 30' 2" x 20' 10". It is now used as a concession area.

The buildings of the homesite are now connected with service roads and graveled walkways made necessary by the large number of visitors.

NOTES

¹Abstract of the Northwest $\frac{1}{2}$ Section 27 Township 23 north, Range 22 west 5th Principal Meridian held by the Shepherd of the Hills Historical Society.

²These now are in the form of postcard prints or printed reproductions. The negatives or original prints are not available. Copies of four are included in the documentation.

³The photos not showing progressive changes in the building fabric are not easily put in sequence.

⁴Springfield Land Office records--microfilm copy in the Springfield-Greene County Public Library.

⁵O. R. Morril, The Story of Uncle Ike (Springfield, Missouri: Cain Printing Co., 1948), p.25.

⁶Morril.

⁷Alma Jones Langeson, "Old Matt, Aunt Mollie, Harold Bell Wright Plus the Cabin," The Ozarks Mountaineer, June, 1962, p. 5. J. K. Ross, "Old Matt's View of It," White River Valley Historical Quarterly, 5 (Spring, 1975), p. 13.

⁸Various tour guides employed by the Shepherd of the Hills Historical Society.

⁹Mark Trimble reported having seen the paper when it was found, and that it remained on the cabin wall for some time, interview July 20, 1982. Bruce Trimble reported finding the paper in: Bruce R. Trimble, "The Story of the Shepherd of the Hills Farm and Its Interesting Collections," unpublished typescript, N.D., p. 5. Held by the Shepherd of the Hills Historical Society.

¹⁰This judgment is based upon the authors examination of a number of log

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houses in the Ozarks region and upon these sources: Charles McRaven, Building the Hewn Log House, (Hollister, Missouri: Mountain Publishing Services, 1978); C. A. Weslager, The Log Cabin in America, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1969); Terry G. Jordan, Texas Log Buildings, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978); Harrison Goodall and Renee Friedman, Log Structures, (Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1980).

¹¹Trimble, Old Matt, p. 4 and Langeson, p. 5.

¹²Morril, p. 11.

¹³Mark Trimble, interview, July 15, 1982.

¹⁴Abstract.

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John K. Ross; his second wife, Anna; and his son, Charles, by his first wife came to Missouri from Indiana. After a short stay in West Plains, the family moved to Springfield where John found work as a carpenter, and the family ran a small hotel in a large house. Later they bought a farm just outside Springfield, and John continued to work as a carpenter.¹

In the depression of the early 1890s, John Ross was forced to sell the farm to pay the mortgage, and the family homesteaded in the White River area just west of what is now Branson, Missouri.² Some sources would have the family on the homestead prior to 1890, but this would not be in accord with the time of the panic (see the discussion of the dating of the cabin in section 7).³ While accounts vary, it seems probable that Ross chose his site and staked out his homestead in 1895, finishing the log section of this cabin that winter.⁴

In the following summer (1896), the minister Harold Bell Wright first visited the area. He was on his way into Arkansas but was stopped for a while by a rain-swollen White River. He had been on his way to help his father and brother who had become ill on a hunting and trapping expedition. Wright would visit the area frequently in the following years, staying with and learning to know the Rosses and others.⁵

Just at the end of the last century, Wright developed an illness which apparently was diagnosed as consumption.⁶ He also began writing as a means of developing sermons for his congregation. He had already written That Printer of Udell's (published in 1903) when he arrived at the Ross farm for an extended summer stay to convalesce and to gather material for another story set in the Ozarks. It was about 1903 when he stayed in a large tent with a wood floor and frame. It was set up on a high place about 120 yards northwest of the Ross house, which has come to be called "Inspiration Point." That summer Wright wrote the first draft of The Shepherd of the Hills.⁷

The book names and describes local places and is peopled by some characters based upon the Rosses and their neighbors. The Rosses became the Matthews family of Old Matt, Aunt Mollie, and Young Matt.⁸

The Shepherd of the Hills was published in 1907 and almost immediately became enormously popular. Apparently even before John Ross sold the farm in 1910, people had begun to arrive wishing to see the people and places of the novel.⁹ It has been asserted that at least part of the reason the Rosses moved was because of the constant visits, although John Ross wrote that he and "Mollie" did not wish to manage so large a farm without their son's help, and Charles no longer wished to remain on the farm.¹⁰

In December of 1910, John and Anna Ross sold the farm to W. L. Driver who would own and farm the place until 1926.¹¹ During the latter part of this period, he let the buildings deteriorate.¹²

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John and Anna Ross moved a short distance away to a settlement called Garber on the Missouri-Pacific Railroad line. There they ran a small country store and post office. John and his wife both died in 1923, and Charles was killed in a motorcycle accident in California in 1934.¹³

Although it was not open to the public and had fallen into disrepair, the farm continued to be a place to visit for those who braved the bad roads. John Ross stated that most of the mill was carried off by tourists.¹⁴ The city of Branson had grown from a rail stop at the White River, and Lake Taneycomo, created by Powersite Dam in 1913, was beginning to draw more people to the area.

Pearl Spurlock and her husband came to Branson during World War I and set up a garage and taxi service. While Pearl did not run a large-scale, tour-and-taxi business until after her husband's death in 1929, beginning in 1920 she regularly led "Shepherd of the Hills" tours. She knew the Rosses, and in her book, Over the Old Ozark Trails, she states that in 1924 their graves were still unmarked. She began a monument fund and by the next year had collected \$250 from her passengers. The monument was unveiled in October, 1925.¹⁵ It is clear that by the mid-20s, tourism to the Shepherd of the Hills sites was well established and involved a number of people. This is also born out by a proposal for a Shepherd of the Hills National Park, which was the substance of House of Representatives Bill 11477 in 1928.¹⁶

Lizzie McDaniel (King), daughter of a prominent Springfield banker, visited the homestead and was upset by its deteriorated condition. In 1926 she bought the Ross farm, began to restore the house, and recovered its furnishings. Today most of the home's furnishings were possessions of the Rosses.¹⁷

At first Lizzie McDaniel lived in the Ross house, but she soon moved into a house she had built some distance to the east on the farm property. This house now serves as a museum and is not part of the area proposed for the Register.

From the time she acquired the property in 1926 until her death in 1946, Miss McDaniel did a good deal to make the Ross homesite accessible to visitors. She used her influence; and in 1936 the state highway, now Highway 76, was built west from Branson.¹⁸ She leased the hilltop known as Inspiration Point for a state park. This was where Harold Bell Wright's tent was located when he wrote The Shepherd of the Hills.¹⁹ Lizzie McDaniel was one of the principal individuals who opened the area for automobile tourism.

According to Bruce Trimble, Lizzie McDaniel envisioned further development for the farm, including a museum and an open air theater.²⁰

Upon Lizzie McDaniel's death in 1946, the Ross farm went to the Civic League of Branson. The League retained the Ross house, and the remainder of the estate was sold to Dr. and Mrs. Bruce Trimble.²¹ Bruce Trimble, formerly a professor at the University of Kansas City, maintained the Ross homesite for the

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public to visit, opened a coffee shop and a novelty shop, and made Miss Lizzie's house into a museum. He also began construction of an amphitheater in the Roark Creek hollow northeast of the Ross house.²² Bruce Trimble died in 1957 before the amphitheater opened. However Mrs. Trimble and their son Mark continued the plans, and in 1960 the Shepherd of the Hills dramatization was performed in the Old Mill amphitheater for the first time.²³

In 1966 the Shepherd of the Hills Historical Society was incorporated with Mark Trimble as chairman. On February 1, 1977, the Society acquired the Ross house from the Branson Civic League.²⁴ This transaction is of interest because the Society pays interest on the note annually, but the principal is not to be paid until the year 2027.²⁵ By this means, the Branson Civic League is insured a continuing source of support for the Branson library.²⁶

The Ross house, now normally referred to as "Old Matt's Cabin," is maintained and open at regular hours for the public to visit free of charge individually or as part of a Shepherd of the Hills Historical Society tour. Some 100,000 people visit the house each season. About 250,000 attend the dramatization each year, and the Shepherd of the Hills Historical Society employs some 200 people full- and part-time.²⁷

The Ross homesite is significant not only because it closely associated with a work of popular fiction which made publishing history, it was also of major importance in the development of automobile tourism in the White River area. It remains an important part of the tourist industry--the major industry in the area.

If being a fundamental part of the process which shaped and changed the physical, economic, and cultural landscape of a region constitutes historical significance, then the Ross homesite certainly has such significance.

NOTES

¹Bruce R. Trimble, The Story of Old Matt, (Hollister, Missouri: Steve Miller Press, N.D.) pp. 1-5.

²The national panic described would have been that which began in the first year of Cleveland's second term as president of the United States in 1893. It was part of a depression which began earlier and continued for some time.

³See section 7, the discussion of the date of the original log section of the house and the sources cited.

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4J. K. Ross, "Old Matt's View of It," White River Valley Historical Quarterly, 5 (Spring, 1975) p. 14.

5While there is basic general agreement details of the accounts of Wright's visits vary, and sometimes sources give dates several years apart for the same event. Ross, pp. 14-15; Trimble, Old Matt, pp. 8-12; O. R. Morril, The Story of Uncle Ike (Springfield, Missouri: Cain Printing Co., 1948), p. 14.

6Wright's illness and general frail health is mentioned in many sources as was the treatment: rest, country air, etc. The term consumption itself, however, was mentioned only in The Shepherd of the Hills programs, i.e. The Shepherd of the Hills: Souvenir Program, (Shepherd of the Hills Historical Society, Inc., 1968), p. 6.

7A photograph of Wright and his tent is commonly reproduced in The Shepherd of the Hills programs as note 6.

8This idea is, of course, central to the importance attributed to the Ross house along with a number of other sites in the area and is important, true or not. Wright certainly did describe the area and mention its features by name. He also apparently admitted that some of the characters in the book were based upon real people--"Old Matt" and "Aunt Mollie," although idealized, were based upon John Ross and his wife. See: Gibbons Lacy, "Characters of 'Shepherd of the Hills' Not Drawn from Life," The Ozarks Mountaineer, February 1956, p. 9.

9Trimble, Old Matt, pp. 13-14.

10Trimble, Old Matt, p. 14; Ross, p. 17.

11Abstract of the Northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 27, Township 23 north, Range 22 west 5th principal meridian. Held by the Shepherd of the Hills Historical Society.

12Trimble, Old Matt, p. 14.

13This information is covered in several sources, however see: Trimble, Old Matt, p. 14.

14Ross, p. 17.

15Pearl Spurlock, Over the Old Ozark Trails, (Branson, Missouri: The White River Leader, 1936) pp. 86-7. This source is of major importance for the understanding of early tourism in the area and of the enormous importance of the "Shepherd of the Hills" idea.

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Continuation sheet "Old Matt's Cabin"

Item number 8

Page 5

16The Shepherd of the Hills Society retains an interesting series of letters and other documents sent in 1979 and covered by a letter: U. B. Unsell, District Engineer, Missouri State Highway Commission, letter to Mark Trimble, July 18, 1979. The documents include letters of Walter Le Compte, Postmaster, Garber Missouri, and T. H. Cutler, Chief Engineer dated 1928, and a number of pages of data including photographs and maps. All this under the heading: Data Respecting H. R. 11477 in the United States House of Representatives: A Bill to Establish the Shepherd of the Hills National Park near Garber and Reeds Spring in Stone and Taney Counties, Missouri.

17Bruce R. Trimble, "The Story of the Shepherd of the Hills Farm and Its Interesting Collections," unpublished typescript, N.D., p. 3. Held by the Shepherd of the Hills Historical Society, Inc.

18Trimble, "The Story of the Farm," p. 4.

19Abstract.

20Trimble, "The Story of the Farm," p. 4.

21Abstract.

22Shepherd of the Hills: Program, pp. 8-9.

23Shepherd of the Hills: Program, pp. 8-9.

24Deed of Trust, all of plots 1 and 2 in the southwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of the northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 27, Township 23, Range 22 Taney County, Missouri.

25Deed.

26Mark Trimble, Interview, July 15, 1982.

27These figures were supplied by the Shepherd of the Hills Historical Society, Inc., September 1981.

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Continuation sheet "Old Matt's Cabin"

Item number 9

Page 1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Data Respecting H. R. 11477 In the United States House of Representatives, a Bill to Establish the Shepherd of the Hills National Park near Garber and Reed Spring in Stone and Taney Counties, Missouri, 1928. Unpublished collection copies retained by the Shepherd of the Hills Historical Society, Inc.

Deed of Trust. All of plots 1 and 2 in the Southwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of the Northwest $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 22, Township 23, Range 22 Taney County, Missouri. Retained by the Shepherd of the Hills Historical Society, Inc.

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Continuation sheet "Old Matt's Cabin"

Item number 9

Page 2

Trimble, Mark. Interviews. July 15 and 20, 1982.

Unsell, O. B. District Engineer, Missouri State Highway Commission. Letter to Mark Trimble. July 18, 1979.

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Continuation Sheet "Old Matt's Cabin"

Item number 10

distance of 100 feet; thence westerly parallel with said right of way a distance of 260 feet; thence south a distance of 100 feet; thence easterly along said right of way a distance of 110 feet to the point of beginning, containing .6 acres, more or less.

This area includes the house and outbuildings but excludes the recent development of the Shepherd of the Hills Farm.

Continuation Sheet "Old Matt's Cabin"

Item number 6

2. Missouri State Historical Survey
1982
Office of Historic Preservation
Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City

Missouri 65102

Continuation Sheet "Old Matt's Cabin"

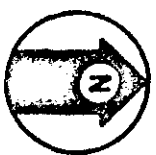
Item number 11

2. James M. Denny, Section Chief, Survey & Registration
State Contact Person
Department of Natural Resources
Historic Preservation Program
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City

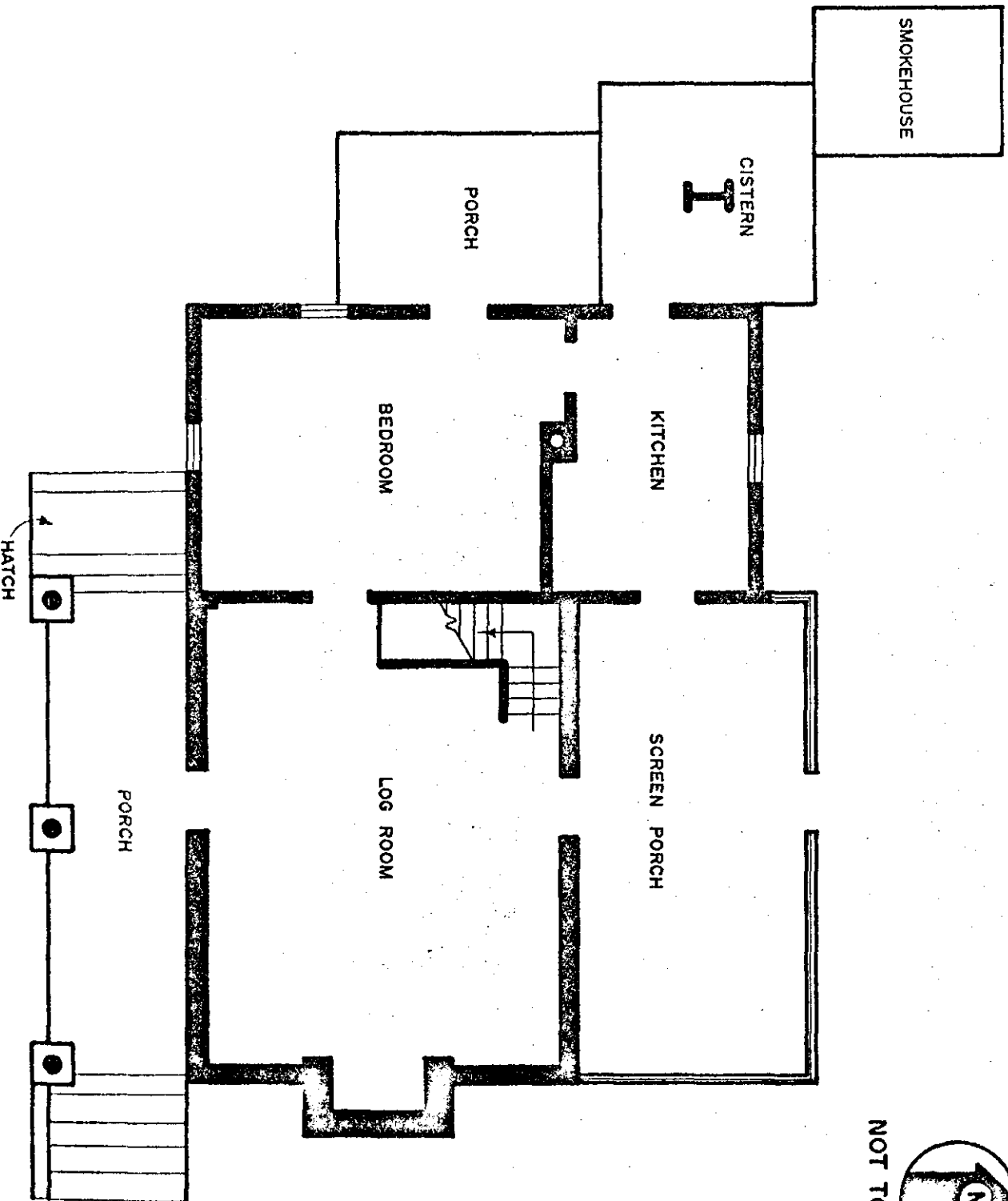
December 14, 1982
314/751-4096

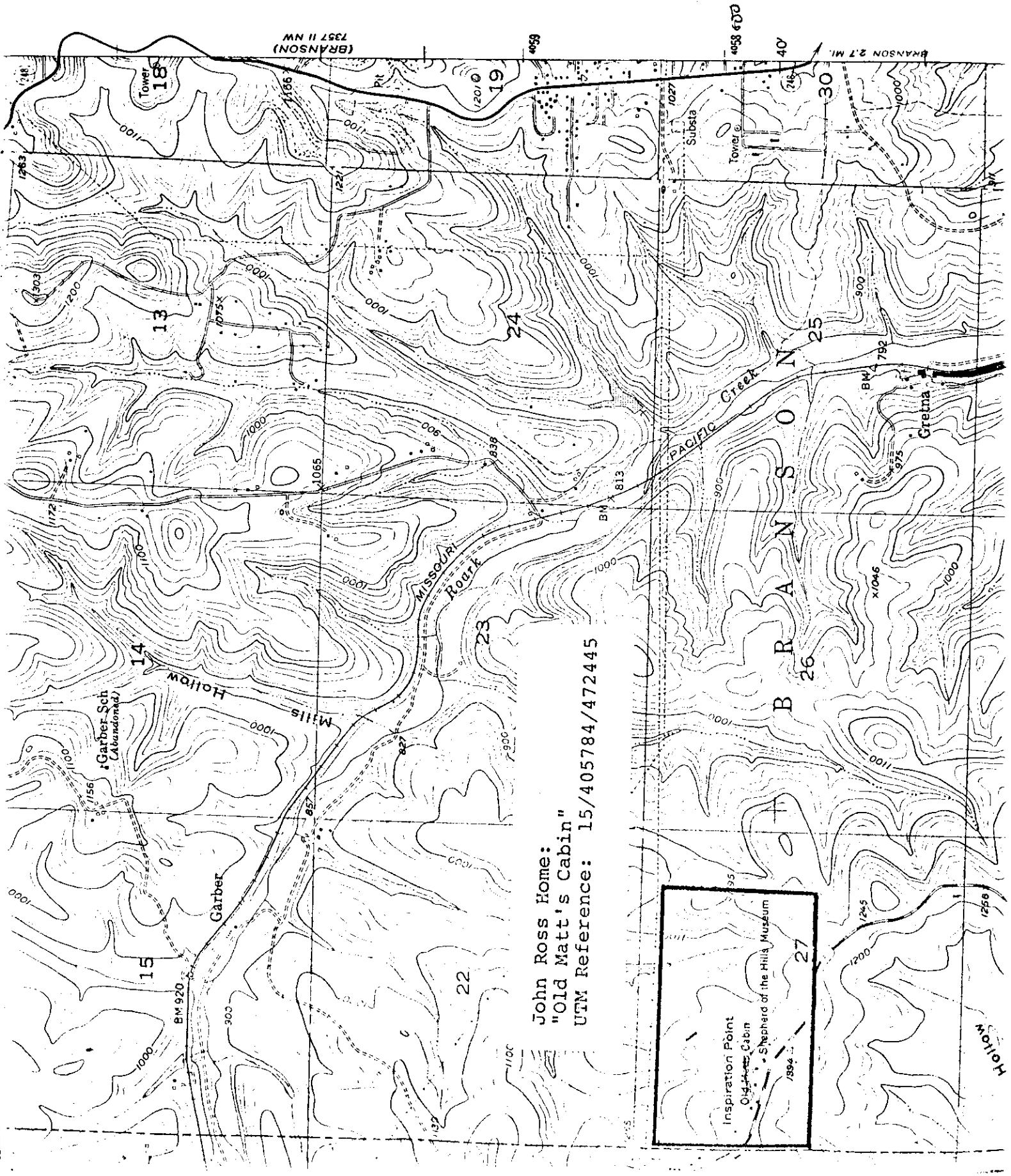
Missouri 65102

FLOOR PLAN
 JOHN ROSS HOUSE "OLD MATT'S CABIN"
 BRANSON VICINITY, TANNEY COUNTY, MISSOURI

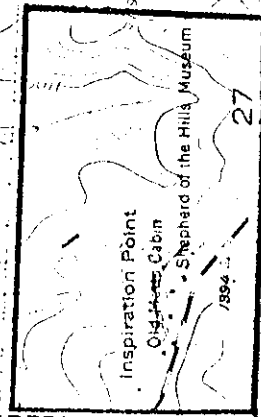


NOT TO SCALE





John Ross Home:
"Old Matt's Cabin"
UTM Reference: 15/405784/472445



#626

ROSS, JOHN, HOUSE (OLD MATT'S CABIN)

COUNTY:

Taney

LOCATION:

Branson vicinity

OWNER:

The Shepherd of the Hills Historical Soc., Inc.

ADDRESS:

Rt. 1, Box 10, Branson, MO

DATE APPROVED BY A.C.:

January 20, 1983

DATE SENT TO D.C.:

June 10, 1983

DATE OF REC. IN D.C.:

June 21, 1983

DATE PLACED ON NATIONAL REGISTER:

July 21, 1983

DATE CERTIFICATE AWARDED
(AND PRESENTOR):

DATE FILE REVIEWED:

John Ross House, now commonly known as "Old Matt's Cabin," has historic significance in that it is a somewhat atypical example of a substantial, additive log-and-frame home built during the last years of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth century; second, it is associated with a major popular writer, Harold Bell Wright, who visited there often; third because of its association with The Shepherd of the Hills, the house became a place to visit in the early days of Ozark automobile tourism.

JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

1 of 18

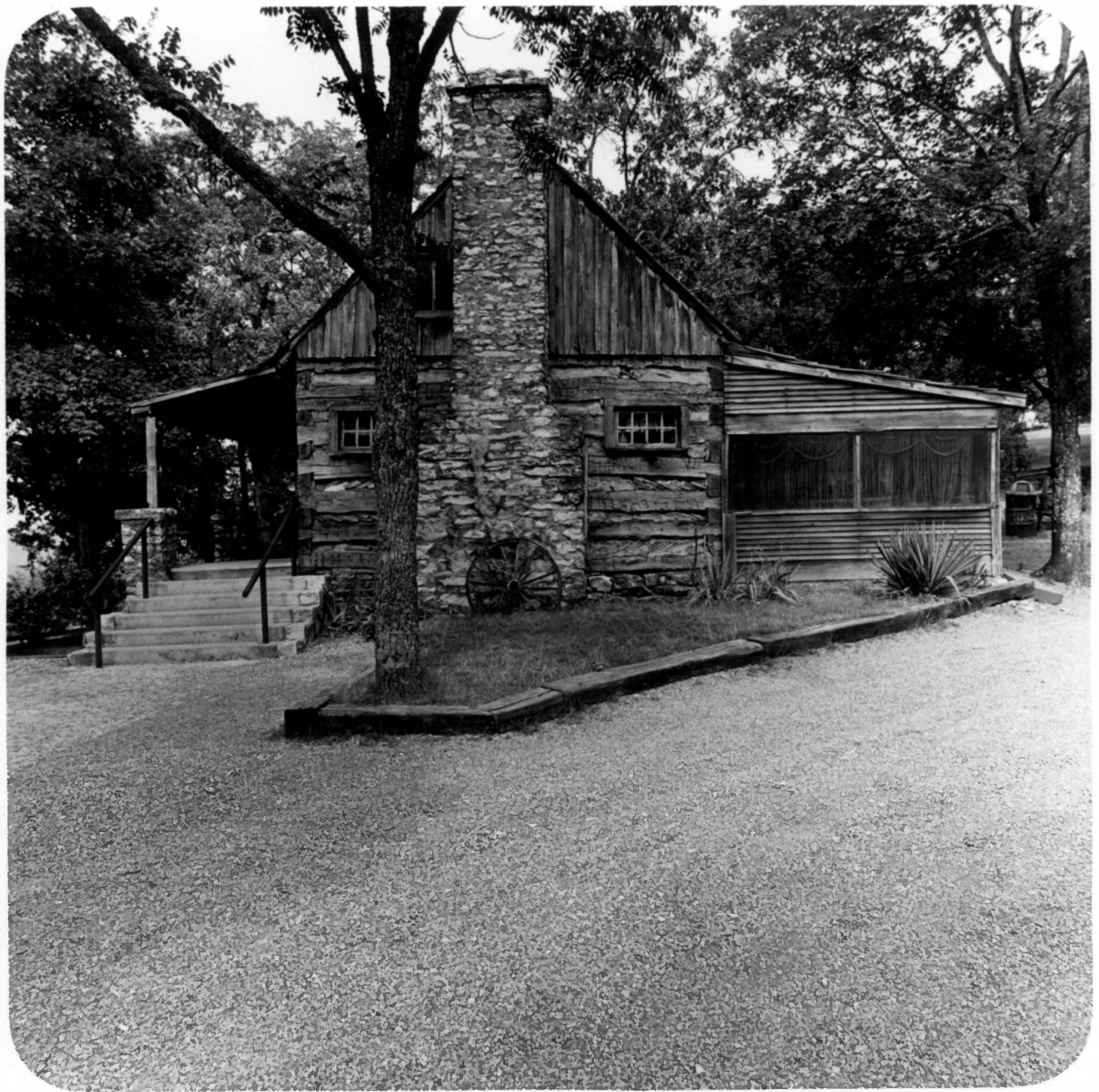
Photographer: Mark Trimble
Date: August, 1982
Neg. Loc.: Shepherd of the Hills
Historical Society
Rt. 1, Box 770
Branson, Missouri 65612

East facade.

JOHN ROSS HOUSE
MISSOURI HIGHWAY 76
TANEY COUNTY, MISSOURI
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK TRIMBLE
AUGUST, 1982

1-15

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EAST FACADE



JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

2 of 18

Photographer: Mark Trimble
Date: August, 1982
Neg. Loc.: Shepherd of the Hills
Historical Society
Rt. 1, Box 770
Branson, Missouri 65612

North facade.

JOHN ROSS HOUSE 2-15
MISSOURI HIGHWAY 76
TANEY COUNTY, MISSOURI
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK TRIMBLE
AUGUST, 1982

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NORTH FACADE



JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

3 of 18

Photographer: Mark Trimble
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Neg. Loc.: Shepherd of the Hills
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West facade and smoke house.

JOHN ROSS HOUSE 3-15
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TANEY COUNTY, MISSOURI
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK TRIMBLE
AUGUST, 1982

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WEST FACADE & SMOKE HOUSE



JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

4 of 18

Photographer: Mark Trimble
Date: August, 1982
Neg. Loc.: Shepherd of the Hills
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Southwest corner.

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MISSOURI HIGHWAY 76
TANEY COUNTY, MISSOURI
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK TRIMBLE
AUGUST, 1982

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SOUTHWEST CORNER



JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

5 of 18

Photographer: Mark Trimble
Date: August, 1982
Neg. Loc.: Shepherd of the Hills
Historical Society
Rt. 1, Box 770
Branson, Missouri 65612

South facade.

JOHN ROSS HOUSE 5-15
MISSOURI HIGHWAY 76
TANEY COUNTY, MISSOURI
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK TRIMBLE
AUGUST, 1982

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SOUTH FACADE



JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

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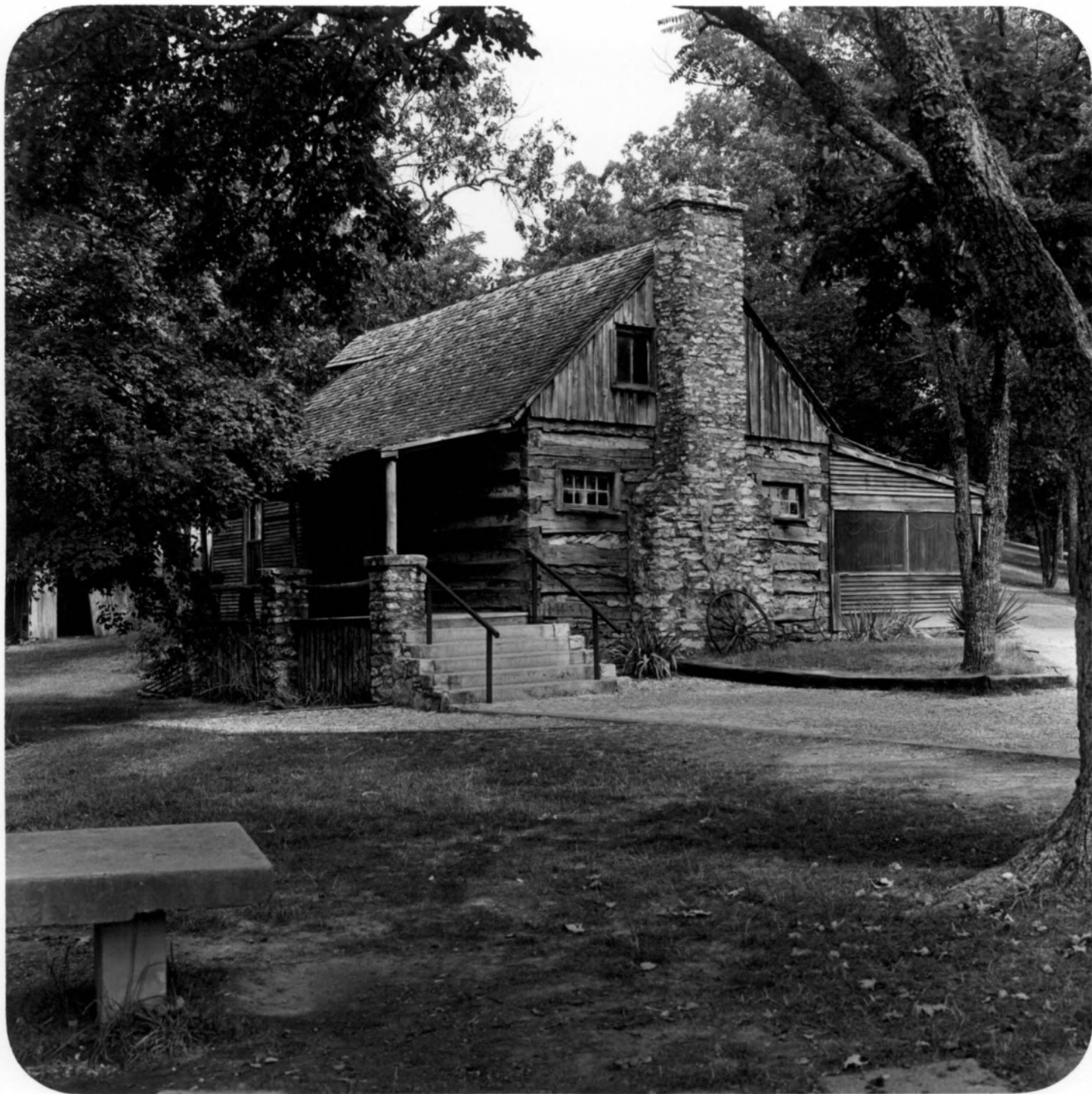
Photographer: Mark Trimble
Date: August, 1982
Neg. Loc.: Shepherd of the Hills
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Branson, Missouri 65612

Southeast corner.

JOHN ROSS HOUSE 6-15
MISSOURI HIGHWAY 76
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PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK TRIMBLE
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SOUTHEAST CORNER



JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

7 of 18

Photographer: Mark Trimble
Date: August, 1982
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Wagon shed, smoke house and house as seen
from the west.

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MISSOURI HIGHWAY 76
TANEY COUNTY, MISSOURI
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK TRIMBLE
AUGUST, 1982

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WAGON SHED, SMOKE HOUSE AND HOUSE
AS SEEN FROM THE WEST



JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

8 of 18

Photographer: Mark Trimble
Date: August, 1982
Neg. Loc.: Shepherd of the Hills
Historical Society
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Barn, house and walkways as seen from the
east.

JOHN ROSS HOUSE
MISSOURI HIGHWAY 76
TANEY COUNTY, MISSOURI
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK TRIMBLE
AUGUST, 1982

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BARN, HOUSE AND WALKWAYS AS SEEN
FROM THE EAST



JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

9 of 18

Photographer: Mark Trimble
Date: August, 1982
Neg. Loc.: Shepherd of the Hills
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East facades of smoke house and wagon shed.

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MISSOURI HIGHWAY 76
TANEY COUNTY, MISSOURI
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK TRIMBLE
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EAST FACADES OF SMOKE HOUSE AND
WAGON SHED



JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

10 of 18

Photographer: Mark Trimble
Date: August, 1982
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Northeast corner of barn.

JOHN ROSS HOUSE
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TANEY COUNTY, MISSOURI
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NORTHEAST CORNER OF BARN

JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

10 of 18

Photographer: Mark Trimble
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Northeast corner of barn.

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TANEY COUNTY, MISSOURI
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK TRIMBLE

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NORTHEAST CORNER OF BARN

JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

11 of 18

Photographer: Mark Trimble
Date: August, 1982
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Interior detail showing fireplace along east
log wall.

JOHN ROSS HOUSE
MISSOURI HIGHWAY 76
TANEY COUNTY, MISSOURI
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK TRIMBLE
AUGUST, 1982

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INTERIOR DETAIL SHOWING FIREPLACE
ALONG EAST LOG WALL



JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

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Photographer: Mark Trimble
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Interior detail showing stair in northwest
corner of log room.

JOHN ROSS HOUSE
MISSOURI HIGHWAY 76
TANEY COUNTY, MISSOURI
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK TRIMBLE
AUGUST, 1982

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INTERIOR DETAIL SHOWING STAIR IN
NORTHWEST CORNER OF LOG ROOM



JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

13 of 18

Photographer: Mark Trimble
Date: August, 1982
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Interior detail showing southeast corner of
bedroom in frame addition.

JOHN ROSS HOUSE

13-15

MISSOURI HIGHWAY 76
TANEY COUNTY, MISSOURI
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK TRIMBLE
AUGUST, 1982

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INTERIOR DETAIL SHOWING SOUTHEAST
CORNER OF BEDROOM IN FRAME ADDITION



JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

14 of 18

Photographer: Mark Trimble
Date: August, 1982
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Interior detail of kitchen; facing west.

JOHN ROSS HOUSE 14-15
MISSOURI HIGHWAY 76
TANEY COUNTY, MISSOURI
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK TRIMBLE
AUGUST, 1982

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INTERIOR DETAIL OF KITCHEN FACING
WEST



JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

#15 of 18

Photographer: Mark Trimble
Date: August, 1982
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Interior detail of screen porch; facing west.

JOHN ROSS HOUSE 15-15
MISSOURI HIGHWAY 76
TANEY COUNTY, MISSOURI
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK TRIMBLE
AUGUST, 1982

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INTERIOR DETAIL OF SCREEN PORCH
FACING WEST



5A

JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

16 of 18

Photographer: unknown

Date: unknown

Neg. Loc.:

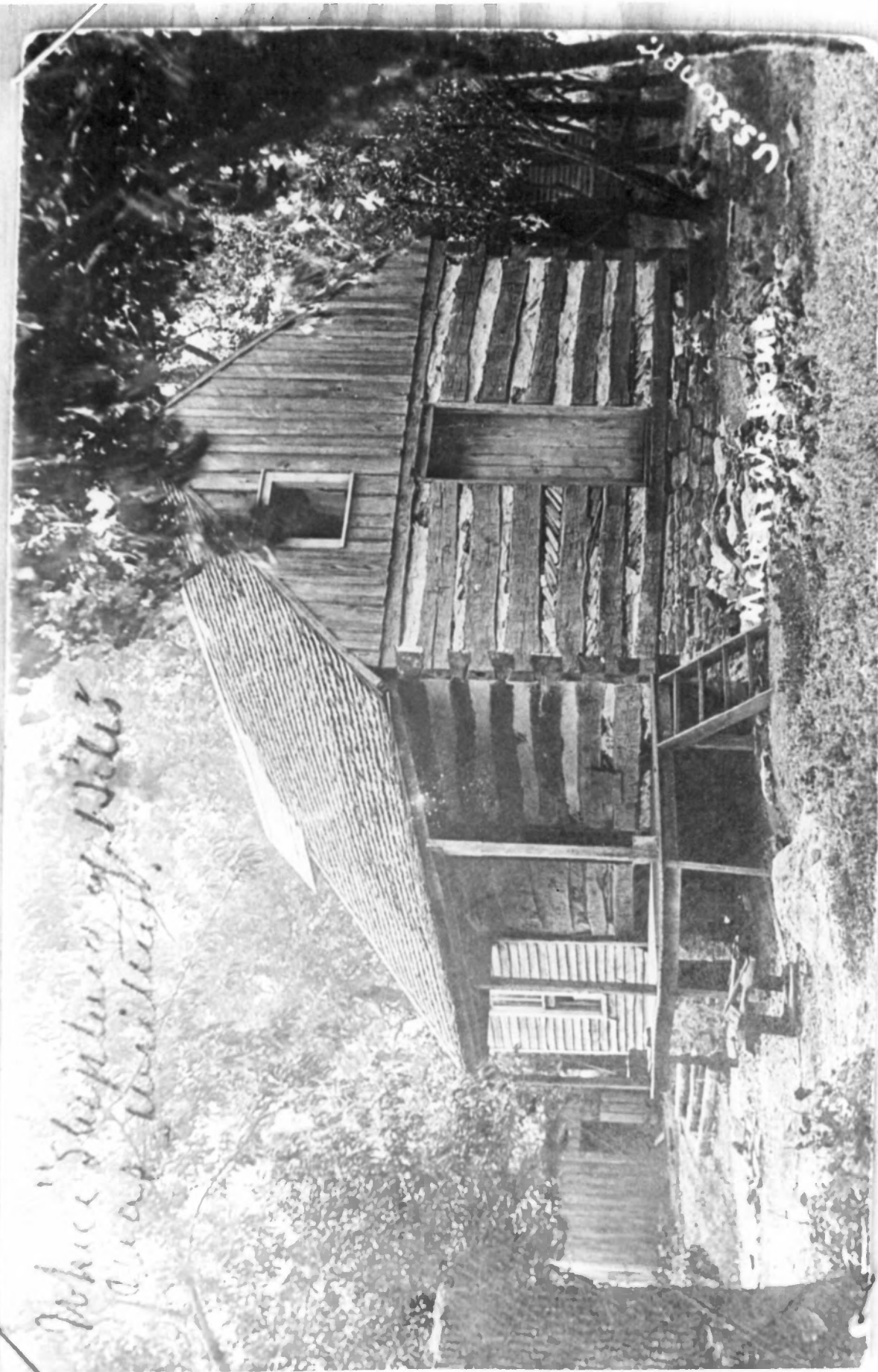
Department of Natural Resources
Historic Preservation Program

P.O. Box 176

Jefferson City, Missouri 65102

Historic view showing the ridge dormer and the gable window. Copy made from an old postcard print in the collection of the Shepherd of the Hills Historical Society Collection.

White's Skipton of Wils
Dear William,



U.S. 500-11

JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

17 of 18

Photographer: unknown

Date: unknown

Neg. Loc.: Department of Natural Resources
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Historic view showing additions of fireplace, stone work for porch, screen porch, and wagon shed. Original apparently taken while the place was still a working farm. Copy made from a print in the collection of the Shepherd of the Hills Historical Society.



JOHN ROSS HOUSE
Missouri Highway 76
Taney County, Missouri

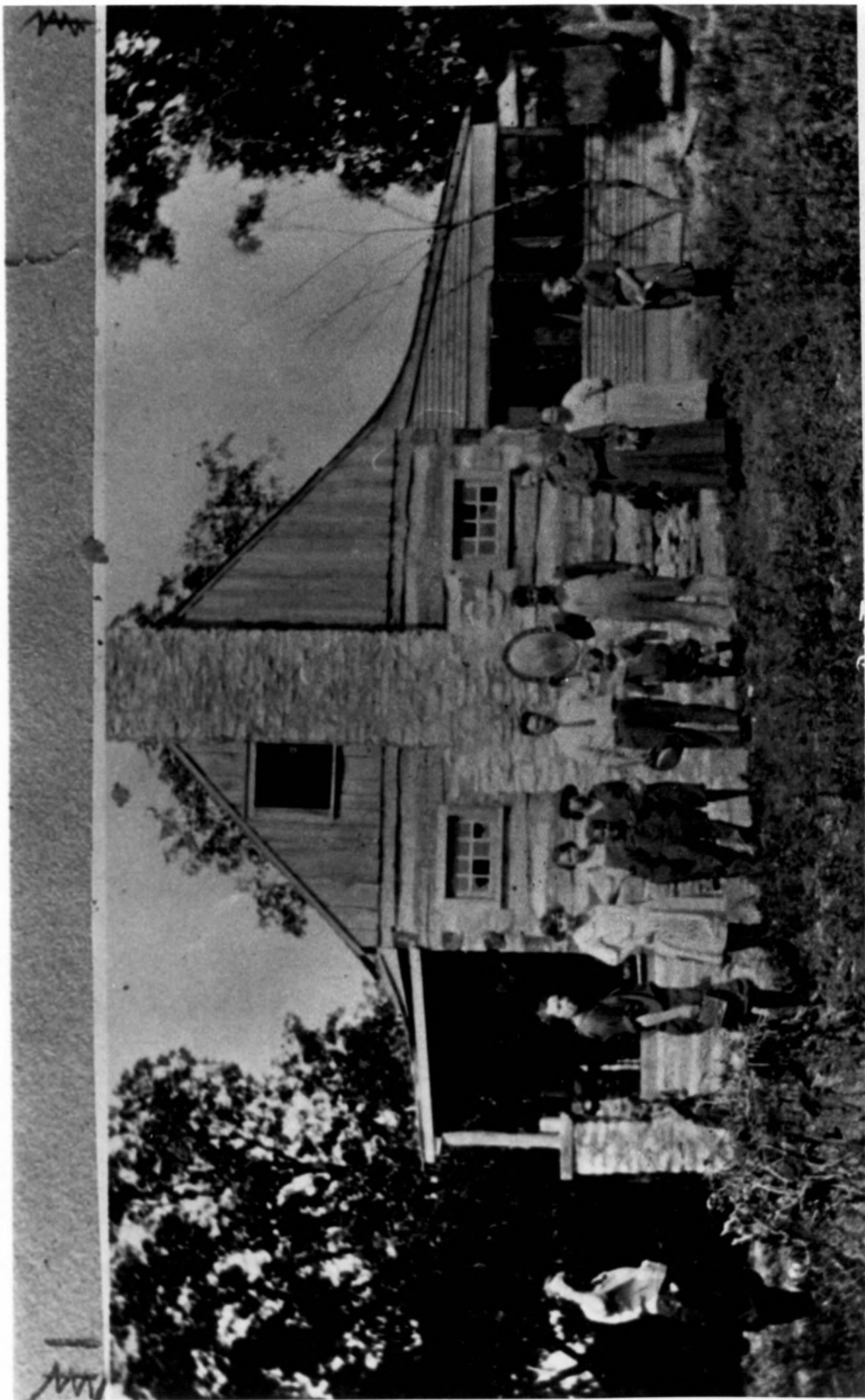
18 of 18

Photographer: unknown

Date: unknown

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Historic view: note the dress of the people
and the broken windows. Likely made before
home was restored by Lizzie McDaniel about
1927. Copy made from a print in the
collection of the Shepherd of the Hills
Historical Society.



EXTRA PHOTOS

Good
010



